

REMARKS

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 1-4, 6, 13, 14, 16-18, and 21-27 have been amended. Claims 29 and 30 have been Added. Claim 10 has been cancelled. No new matter is being presented, and approval and entry are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-9, and 11-29 are pending and under consideration.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 USC §§ 102 and 103

In the Office Action, at pages 2-9, claims 1-12 and 18-27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as anticipated by Swenson et al (USP No. 5, 490,097). This rejection is traversed and reconsideration is requested.

In the Office Action, at pages 9-12, claims 13-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over Swenson in view of Williams (USP No. 5,675,733). This rejection is traversed and reconsideration is requested.

The rejection proposes that viewers 84, 86, 88 in Swenson (Figure 3) correspond to claim 1's "message management unit". Claim 1 recites a plurality of terminals (now terminal apparatuses). The rejection proposes that the terminals correspond to Swenson's workstations 84a, 86a, 88a (Figure 3). The rejection also proposes that Swenson's server system 80a corresponds to claim 1's "preparation unit".

Receiver State List Different Than Swenson's Task Status

Claim 1, as amended, recites "a receiver state list containing names of ... receivers ... having received an interpersonal message relating to a business activity, ... also containing individual states of each of the respective receivers, ... where each individual state of each receiver indicates a status of that receiver's activity regarding the business activity, ... based on responses received from the receivers".

According to the present invention, the data displayed on a terminal apparatus is a receiver state list containing receiver names and their associated states, each such state indicating a state of its receiver's activity regarding the business activity (e.g., whether the receivers have respectively completed the assigned business activity, etc.). Swenson does not describe anything related to the idea of generating a summary-type list of the states of receivers

who have respectively received an interpersonal message relating to a business activity.

With the present invention, data displayed on a terminal apparatus is a receiver state list, which shows, for example, receiver names and information indicating individual states of activity regarding the business activity in a message received by the receivers. For example, one state might indicate that a receiver has completed the business activity of the message, and another state may indicate another receiver has not completed the business activity of the message. In contrast, as discussed below, Swenson both explicitly and implicitly discusses displaying, on a terminal viewing a task, information regarding only the status of the task itself.

Explicitly, the portion of Swenson proposed to correspond to the message management unit (col. 11, lines 19-24) notes that the viewer module and viewer contexts on one computer workstation generally do not direct communications (messages) to viewer modules and viewer contexts on other computer workstations ("no direct communication between these users occurs"). Rather, they send and receive messages to or from the computer workstation running the server module and/or colloquy contexts.

Implicitly, details of Swenson's operations also indicate that Swenson's status information (including message areas 206 and 212) is limited to a single task. Column 16, lines 36-43 of Swenson discuss the viewer sending a "JoinColloquy" command to the server context for that colloquy, along with the user ID of the viewer user sending the command. The server context then stores that user ID as an active viewer of the colloquy. The server responds with a "ColloquyHistory" command directed to the viewer context. With the "ColloquyHistory" message, the server context lists history items for that colloquy, such as the time and date of when any expectations have been met. Column 16, lines 44-54 in Swenson describe a "TaskStatus" message providing data, including the colloquy ID, a task ID, the task status, user IDs that are associated with the task and so on. The client-server data exchanges discussed above show that Swenson is concerned with displaying the status data of a task on a terminal apparatus, but the displayed status data are limited to the status of the task itself (see also col. 16, lines 55-59).

Displaying Receiver State List at Both Terminal Apparatuses of Sender and Receivers

Claim 1 also recites "a message management unit enabling display of, in a mutually associated manner, the interpersonal message relating to the business activity and the receiver state list, where the display is enabled on each of the terminal apparatuses belonging to a sender and the plurality of the receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activity". Swenson does not discuss enabling display, on terminal apparatuses at both the

sender and receivers of the interpersonal message, the interpersonal message, and, in a mutually associated manner, a receiver state list showing states of respective receivers of the interpersonal message.

According to the claim recitation above, a sender of an interpersonal message relating to a business activity becomes able to see on his or her terminal apparatus, in a mutually associated manner, both the interpersonal message and the states of respective receivers of the message. An example of a state is a state indicating whether a receiver respectively completed the business activity. In this way, the sender of a message can review at a glance the states of all the plurality of message receivers without having to laboriously go through response messages from the respective receivers of the sender's message. At the same time, each of the message receivers become able to use their terminal apparatus to view the receiver state list, and thus can review at a glance the state of any other message receivers. It is not possible to achieve a benefit of this kind using Swenson.

Claims 16-18 and 23 recite similar features similar to those discussed above. Withdrawal of the rejection is further respectfully requested.

Dependent Claims 2, 21, 24, and 25

Claim 2, for example, recites a feature in which the information indicating the states of the receivers is completion information that indicates whether the receivers have respectively completed the business activity. This information is in accordance with information contained in the response messages sent in response to the interpersonal message, which is sent by a manager of the business activity for inquiring about the progress states concerning the receiver's completion of the business activity, and that the receiver state list is generated incorporating this completion information. Claims 21, 24, and 25 recite similar features. Swenson and the other prior art does not discuss this feature.

Dependent Claims 3, 13, 14, 22, and 26 - Completion Ratio

Claim 3 recites "representing a ratio of receivers having completed the business activity based on the completion information, which indicates respective completion states of the business activity of the receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activity", and the "message list containing, in a mutually associated manner, the information presenting the ratio of the receivers having completed the business activity and also containing a title of the interpersonal message relating to the business activities". In other words, claim 3 relates to a

feature of generating information stating the ratio of receivers (or, in some claims, staff) having completed the business activities based on the completion information, and a message list within which the interpersonal message and the ratio are related. Claims 13, 14, 22, and 26 recite similar features. Swenson and other cited reference documents do not teach generating a message list with a message title related to a ratio of completion of the message's business activity.

Dependent Claim 4

Claim 4 recites "a message preparation unit preparing the interpersonal message to be sent to the receivers by providing the interpersonal message with a confirmation button to be used by each of the receivers to inform the sender whether the assigned business activity has been completed, and when the confirmation button is activated by one of the receivers, setting the information contained in the receiver state list to indicate that the activating receiver has completed the business activity". In other words, claim 4 is concerned with a configuration in which a confirmation button is furnished in the interpersonal message relating to the business activity, and in response to the button being activated by a receiver of the message, the information contained in the receiver state list and indicating the state of this specific receiver is set to indicate that the business activity has been completed.

Having been configured in this manner, the message processing apparatus of the present invention recognizes that receivers who have activated the relevant confirmation buttons have individually completed the business activity.

Swenson does not discuss this kind of function.

DEPENDENT CLAIMS

The dependent claims are deemed patentable due at least to their dependence from allowable independent claims. These claims are also patentable due to their recitation of independently distinguishing features discussed above. Withdrawal of the rejection of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

NEW CLAIMS 29 AND 30

New claims 29 and 30 have been added to recite an aspect of the present invention in which receivers of a message interact with the message to indicate their state of activity with respect to the message. The states are stored and the receivers may then be view the cumulative states in a list.

CONCLUSION

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

Date: 11/18/12

By: [Signature]
J. Randall Beckers
Registration No. 30,358

700 Eleventh Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 434-1500

CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR 1.8(a)

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Date: 18 Nov 2012

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please CANCEL claim 10.

Please AMEND the following claims:

1. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) A message processing apparatus connected to a plurality of terminal[s] apparatuses via a network, comprising:

[a message management unit enabling a user at each of said plurality of terminals to compose interpersonal messages and to view and respond to received interpersonal messages respectively; and]

a preparation unit preparing a receiver state list containing names of a plurality of receivers, each receiver having received an interpersonal message relating to a business activity, the receiver state list also containing individual states of each of the respective receivers, each individual state being mutually associated with the name of a corresponding receiver, where each individual state of each receiver indicates a status of that receiver's activity regarding the business activity, and where the indicating is based on responses received from the receivers in response to the interpersonal message; and

a message management unit enabling display of, in a mutually associated manner, the interpersonal message relating to the business activity and the receiver state list, where the display is enabled on each of the terminal apparatuses belonging to a sender and the plurality of the receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activity [indicating states of a plurality of receivers of an interpersonal message that is managed by said message management unit].

2. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein, [the receiver state list includes completion information indicating whether the receivers have viewed the interpersonal message or whether the receivers have completed business activities related to a content of the message]

the sender comprises a manager managing the business activity, the receivers comprise respective staff, the interpersonal message is a message inquiring about progress of the staff concerning the business activity, and the manager receives the response messages from the

staff, where the responses include completion information indicating whether the business activity has been completed, and wherein

the preparation unit prepares the receiver state list containing, in the mutually associated manner, the names of the plurality of receivers and the states of each of the respective receivers to indicate, based on completion information in the responses, whether the business activity has been completed.

3. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein:

the preparation unit prepares information representing a ratio of receivers having completed the business activity based on the completion information, which indicates respective completion states of the business activity of the receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activity, and prepares a message list containing, in a mutually associated manner, the information presenting the ratio of the receivers having completed the business activity and also containing a title of the interpersonal message relating to the business activities; and

the message management unit enables display of the message list [content of the [interpersonal message] and the receiver state list in the mutually associated manner [corresponding to the message to be displayed] on each of the [a] terminal [screen] apparatuses belonging to the sender and the plurality of receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activity [in an associated manner].

4. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising [wherein the receiver state list includes:]

a message preparation unit preparing the interpersonal message to be sent to the receivers by providing the interpersonal message with a confirmation button to be used by each of the receivers to inform the sender whether the assigned business activity has been completed, and

when the confirmation button is activated by one of the receivers, setting the information contained in the receiver state list to indicate that the activating receiver has completed the business activity.

[open information indicating open states of the interpersonal message of the plurality of receivers; and

completion information indicating whether the receivers have viewed the interpersonal message or whether the receivers have completed business activities related to a content of the interpersonal message.]

6. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 5, further comprising:

an amendment unit amending the contents of a transmitted interpersonal message stored in the storage unit; and

a recovery unit recovering all the receivers' open information indicating an open state to a not-opened state when the interpersonal message is amended by the amending unit.

10. (CANCELED)

13. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

an open ratio obtaining unit obtaining an open ratio [of] associated with the interpersonal message relating to the business activity, based on the individual states of the respective receivers, [from open information indicating an open state of the receiver of the interpersonal message, and

a display unit displaying the open ratio of the interpersonal message in a message list] wherein

the message management unit enables display of a message list presenting the open ratio in association with a title of the interpersonal message relating to the business activity, where the display is enabled on each of the terminal apparatuses belonging to the sender and the plurality of receivers.

14. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim [1] 2, further comprising:

a completion ratio obtaining unit obtaining a completion ratio [from] based on the completion information indicating [that the receivers of the interpersonal message have viewed the interpersonal message, or that business activities related to a content of the interpersonal message is completed; and] the individual states of the respective receivers on the assigned business activity, wherein

the message management unit enables display of a message list presenting the open ratio in association with a title of the interpersonal message relating to the business activity, where the display is enabled on each of the terminal apparatuses belonging to the sender and the plurality of the receivers.

[a display unit displaying the completion ratio which is obtained from the completion ratio obtaining unit in a message list.]

16. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) A message processing apparatus for processing a plurality of interpersonal messages transmitted from a plurality of terminal[s] apparatuses, the message processing apparatus comprising:

a preparation unit preparing a [message list for displaying a formatted type interpersonal message related to business activities and a non-formatted type interpersonal message not related to business activities, together with a message type] receiver state list containing names of a plurality of receivers each having received an interpersonal message addressed to the receivers, where the interpersonal message relates to a business activity, and where each name is associated with a piece of information indicating a state of the respective receiver, each piece of information being based on a response by each of the receivers of the interpersonal message; and

a message management unit enabling display of the interpersonal message in mutual association with the receiver state list, where the displaying is enabled on a terminal apparatus belonging to a sender and is enabled on the terminal apparatuses of the plurality of receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activity [managing information in the message list].

17. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) A message management method for managing a plurality of interpersonal messages transmitted from a plurality of terminal[s] apparatuses, the message management method comprising:

preparing a receiver state list containing names of a plurality of receivers, each receiver having received an interpersonal message relating to a business activity, the receiver state list also containing individual states of each of the respective receivers, each individual state being mutually associated with the name of a corresponding receiver, where each individual state of each receiver indicates a status of that receiver's activity regarding the business activity, and where the indicating is based on responses received from the receivers in response to the

interpersonal message; and

enabling display of, in a mutually associated manner, the interpersonal message relating to the business activity and the receiver state list, where the display is enabled on each of the terminal apparatuses belonging to a sender and the plurality of the receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activity [displaying a formatted type interpersonal message related to business activities and a non-formatted type interpersonal message not related to the business activities, together with a message type].

18. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) A message management method for use by a server apparatus connected via a network to a plurality of terminal[s] apparatuses, comprising:

preparing a receiver state list containing names of a plurality of receivers each having received an interpersonal message addressed to the receivers, where the interpersonal message relates to a business activity, where each name is mutually associated with a state of its respective receiver, and where each such state is based on a response to the interpersonal message from the state's receiver; and

enabling display of the interpersonal message in association with the receiver state list, where the displaying is enabled on each of the terminal apparatuses belonging to a sender of and the terminal apparatuses of the plurality of receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activities

[enabling a user to compose, view and respond to interpersonal messages from one of the terminals; and

preparing a receiver state list indicating respective states of a plurality of receivers whom an interpersonal message is multi-addressed to].

21. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) The message management method according to claim 18, wherein

when a manager managing the business activity sends the interpersonal message to respective staff inquiring about progress states concerning the business activity, and receives response messages from the plurality of receivers of the interpersonal message inquiring about respective progress states concerning the assigned business activities, preparing the receiver state list containing, in the mutually associated manner, the names of the plurality of receivers and pieces of completion information based upon which the states of the respective receivers indicate whether the receivers have individually completed the business activity

[A message management method for use by a server apparatus connected via a network to a plurality of terminals, comprising:

enabling a user to compose, view and respond to interpersonal messages from one of the terminals;

preparing a receiver state list indicating respective states of a plurality of receivers whom an interpersonal message is multi-addressed to; and

managing information in the receiver state list].

22. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) The message management method according to claim 18, comprising:

preparing information presenting the ratio of the receivers having completed the assigned business activities based on the completion information indicating the completion states of the business activities respectively assigned to the plurality of receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activities, and preparing a message list containing, in a mutually associated manner, the information presenting the ratio of the receivers having completed the assigned business activities and a title of the interpersonal message relating to the business activities, and

enabling display of the message list in mutual association with the receiver state list, where the display is enabled on each of the terminal apparatuses belonging to the sender and the plurality of receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activities [21, wherein the receiver state list includes receivers' names and completion information indicating whether receivers of the interpersonal message have viewed the interpersonal message or whether the receivers of the interpersonal message have completed business activities related to a content of the interpersonal message].

23. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) A computer readable storage medium storing a program, the program comprising:

preparing a receiver state list containing names of a plurality of receivers, each receiver having received an interpersonal message relating to a business activity, the receiver state list also containing individual states of each of the respective receivers, each individual state being mutually associated with the name of a corresponding receiver, where each individual state of each receiver indicates a status of that receiver's activity regarding the business activity, and where the indicating is based on responses received from the receivers in response to the

interpersonal message; and

enabling display of, in a mutually associated manner, the interpersonal message relating to the business activity and the receiver state list, where the display is enabled on each of the terminal apparatuses belonging to a sender and the plurality of the receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activity [enabling a user at one of a plurality of terminals to communicate with a server apparatus to compose, view and respond to an interpersonal message; and

displaying a receiver state list indicating respective states of a plurality of receivers whom the interpersonal message is multi-addressed to].

24. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) [A] The computer readable storage medium storing [a] the program according to claim 23, [the program comprising:] wherein, the program enables display of [displaying an interpersonal message] the receiver state list which includes names of the receivers of the interpersonal message and completion information indicating whether the receivers of the interpersonal messages have viewed the interpersonal messages or [the receivers of the message have] completed business activities related to [a] the contents of the interpersonal] messages, on [a] the terminal apparatus.

25. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) [A] The computer readable storage medium storing [a] the program according to claim 23, [the program comprising:] wherein,

when a manager managing the business activity sends the interpersonal message to respective staff inquiring about progress states concerning the business activity, and receives response messages from the plurality of receivers of the interpersonal message inquiring about respective progress states concerning the assigned business activities, preparing the receiver state list containing the names of the plurality of receivers in mutual association with the states of the respective receivers based on the responses indicating whether the receivers have individually completed the business activity

[enabling a user at one of a plurality of terminals to compose, view and respond to an interpersonal message; and

preparing a receiver state list indicating respective states of a plurality of receivers whom the interpersonal message is multi-addressed to].

26. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) The computer readable storage medium storing a

program according to claim [25] 23, comprising:

preparing information presenting the ratio of the receivers having completed the assigned business activities based on the completion information indicating the completion states of the business activities respectively assigned to the plurality of receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activities, and preparing a message list containing, in a mutually associated manner, the information presenting the ratio of the receivers having completed the assigned business activities and a title of the interpersonal message relating to the business activities, and

enabling display of the message list in mutual association with the receiver state list, where the display is enabled on each of the terminal apparatuses belonging to the sender and the plurality of receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activities

[wherein the receiver state list includes a plurality of receivers' names and completion information indicating whether receivers of the interpersonal message have viewed the interpersonal message or whether the receivers of the interpersonal message have completed business activities related to a content of the interpersonal message].

27. (THREE TIMES AMENDED) The computer readable storage medium storing a program according to claim [26] 23, wherein the program further comprises:

recovering open information for all the receivers of the interpersonal message indicating an open state to a not-opened state when a content of the transmitted interpersonal message is amended by a sender, wherein

the receiver state list includes open information indicating whether the receivers have opened the interpersonal message.

28. (NEW) A method of providing e-mail information, comprising:

based on interactive input generated by recipients of an e-mail message when viewing the e-mail message, storing states of the recipients, where a stored state indicates a degree to which a recipient has completed an activity discussed in the e-mail message received by the recipients, and where the interactive input is inputted using interactive content displayed with the e-mail message; and

allowing the recipients of the e-mail message to view a list of the stored states of the recipients of the e-mail message.

29. (NEW) A method according to claim 29, wherein the state of activity reflects a recipient's determination that the recipient has completed the activity.